

SENATOR GOODRICH: Senator Chambers, the trend in retirement systems, for example, in recent years has been to compel participation by all employees in the retirement system. The reason for that is that we want the employees to have something in their hand when they retire at the end of a long career with City-County or any other governmental subdivision. If there is a feature in the bulk of the plans that says if the benefits are less than \$25 per month, they may cash out, take their money and use it for whatever they want to use it for. If the benefits are over \$25 per month they may not cash out. Now what we want, frankly, and we have been doing, and you'll notice we gave the judges a second chance to come into their plan. We've given the teachers two different times that we have opened it up to allow them to come back in after they have chosen, for example, not to come into their plan, then they come back later on and say "Well we made a mistake. We would really like to get in". Naturally, the closer they get to retirement age the more they're going to think 'wait a minute, we made a mistake, we should be in the plan'. So the trend, over the last three to four years, has been make all employees participate in the plan if they have been there two years, and if they are 25 years of age or more.

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Thank you Senator Goodrich. Members of the Legislature, I can understand some social programs that a government would set in operation. But to impose, as a condition of employment, the necessity to join a retirement plan, whether you want to or not I think, is not the correct thing to do. Senator Goodrich mentioned an example of teachers and perhaps some judges desiring, after mature reflection, to get into such a plan. Well let's make it voluntary. At any point, where a person decides that he or she would like to enter, that can be accomplished. But to have a statute which imposes, as a condition of employment, the joining of a retirement plan, I think, is overreaching and improper. If the words that I am suggesting are adopted the county board would still have the power to authorize the board of trustees to establish a plan. But it would be open to the employees and we would have a while to see whether or not enough employees were even interested in it to join it. As for Douglas County, which is the largest county in the state, they closed, virtually, the County Hospital. So what becomes of these people whose money, under a bill like this, would have been taken from them? Then their employment just terminated all of a sudden because a county board member, or some of them, decide that the County Hospital is most vulnerable, and at that point funds for the county can be cut. I'm going to ask that you consider what I'm suggesting, that you return this bill so that we can make it voluntary for the employees. If they choose to enter, they can. If they choose not to, they cannot be compelled. If, after one year, they decide that they should get into the plan, that it's worthwhile, it is still possible for them to get in. If somebody who is in it decided he or she wants to get out, that can be accomplished. I'm asking that you return LB 346 for this specific amendment. On page 2, line 7, after the word "employees" add "who choose to participate". That is the motion.

SPEAKER LUEDTKE: Chair recognizes Senator Goodrich.